Life on Mars? Andrew Johnson (ad.johnson@ntlworld.com) Sept 2005 “But the film is a saddening bore” “The conventional view of the solar system is, on the whole, somewhat dull to the average person. Certainly there are high points, such as Saturn’s incredible ring system, now being studied in superb detail by Cassini (the most complex robotic probe ever built) and items such as Jupiter’s Great Red Spot (which has been present for at least 300 years). For those people who move from the “science fiction worlds” portrayed in Star Trek, Star Wars and Babylon 5 to a study of our Solar System, however, unless they are excited by weird geology or extreme weather systems, there seems to be little to “write home about”.”

In recent months, however, I have begun to wonder if this “somewhat dull” view of the solar system is entirely justified. Certainly people have pointed out a number of prominent anomalies – both on the Moon and elsewhere in the Solar System. These anomalies might indicate that there may be more to our “local neighbourhood” than the randomised rock structures and the exotic atmospheric chemistry, which are the “bread and butter” of those who study Astronomy and Planetary Science. I have now come to feel quite strongly that the pages of our Encyclopaedias and other reference books should include a more considered analysis of certain features, which have been photographed at sufficient resolution to show that they do not seem to fit into a “standard picture” of geology. “Take a Look at the Law Man Beating up the Wrong Guy…” “If there is one anomaly in the Solar System that people seem to have heard of, it is the so-called “face” on the surface of Mars, discovered by the Viking 1 orbiter in 1976. The focus of this article, however, will not be on the face, even though there are many interesting features that it possesses and, in my opinion, it should not merely be written off as a mesa or other “uninteresting geological feature”. Readers are encouraged to undertake their own further research. Unlike UFO or paranormal research, Mars Anomaly research gets the vast majority of its data from a well established and supposedly highly credentialed, government-funded organisation – NASA. So, this immediately should remove one of the stumbling blocks that are often used to criticise other research and researchers of anomalous phenomena. “Cause I wrote it ten times or more” Another important consideration in a discussion of Martian Anomalies is the question of “Life on Mars”. I remember back in 1977 or 1978 the results of the Viking Soil Sampling Experiment (called “Labelled Release”) were announced – the experiment had successfully detected Microbes in the Martian sand. This seemed significant but not all that exciting. Great – there were some microscopic bacteria metabolising chemicals in the Martian soil or atmosphere. Then, NASA “unannounced” this discovery, about 1 year later, saying the chemistry behind the life-detection experiment was flawed and what had been detected was the result of some kind of inorganic oxidation effect. We were “back to square one” (or should that be ‘quadrat’ one). Mars was a dead world. What was not given wide exposure were the later statements of Dr Gilbert Levin, the man who designed and created the Mars Viking Life-Detection experiment, following what was probably simply the debunking of his results. “The Viking LR experiment detected living microorganisms in the soil of Mars,” He added that after years of tests, and over two dozen non-biological explanations later, "none of the many attempts to establish the oxidant's mimicry of the LR data did so.”

(http://www.space.com/news/spacehistory/viking_life_010728-1.html) Recently, there has been resurgence of interest in exactly this type of experiment, following the discovery of Methane and Formaldehyde by the ESA Mars Express probe. (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tex/4295475.stm) One of the Project Scientists, Prof Vittorio Formisano, has also gone on to state that the Formaldehyde is present in measurable quantities in the Martian Atmosphere. The significance of this is that if you were to put an amount of Formaldehyde in the atmosphere, say released from a bottle, it would decompose into other compounds, through the action of sunlight, in only a few hours. (http://www.inchem.org/documents/ehc/ehc/ehc89.htm). This therefore suggests that something on the surface or in the atmosphere of Mars is producing formaldehyde. Formaldehyde is an organic compound – thought only to be produced as a by-product of active biological processes. Its presence, then, could indicate existing life on the Red Planet. Scientists, at least publicly, seem keener to focus on the “lifeless” explanation of this chemistry – generally hinting that these so-called “bio-marker” gases could have formed due to another hitherto undiscovered process. In one sense, for a scientist, this is a sensible statement to make – the full details of the chemistry at work on the Red Planet are not publicly known, however, it is my opinion that Science never progresses very much when it has a cautious intellectual outlook. “It’s The Freakiest Show…” Let’s now look at what I think are some unquestionably odd pictures from Mars. There are a number of Web Sites which have described these already such as http://www.metasresearch.org and http://www.marsanomalyresearch.com/. However, these sites include a range of images, some of which, in my opinion, are difficult to “get excited about” – from vague outlines of a side view of a Nefertiti-like face to apparent grid structures on the ground (which look to me more like JPEG image compression artefacts, although they could be something else). In my deliberations on this topic, I initially focused primarily on 2 images that were taken by Mars Global Surveyor several years ago. It puzzles me why I never heard about these images on a Science programme (such as the BBC’s Horizon series) because, to me, they are truly, truly remarkable. The first image was taken on 19th May 2000. The original image data can be found here http://ida.wr.usgs.gov/html/m15012/m1501228.html. In researching details for this article, I came across the same image posted on Malin Space Science Systems. The comparison is an interesting one – see http://www.msss.com/moc_gallery/m13_m18/images/M15/M1501228.html. From the information on these pages, I calculated the crater to be roughly 530 meters across. There are 2 things which are clearly very curious about this image. Firstly, there appears to be a well-defined dome structure and secondly there appear to be “ribs” on this dome. Can this be a natural formation? The second image was taken on 16th July 1998 and can also be found on Malin Space Science Systems http://www.msss.com/moc_gallery/ab1_m04/images/SP243004.html. From the information on these pages, I calculated the line running in the “1 O’clock” position to be roughly 4.8km – over 3 miles - long! It then intersects at right angles with another feature about 2 miles long! Why has this incredible feature not been analysed more thoroughly? “Sailors Fighting in the Dance Hall” To try and get a qualified opinion about how some of these features may
have formed, I sent an e-mail to someone on the Beagle2 team (the ill-fated UK-built Mars Lander) and I included the original links to the dome structure, shown above and a fairly comprehensive analysis I had read elsewhere (http://palermoproject.com/lowell2004/grandcentral.htm). I asked could they explain the features of the Dome Structure, or even provide a model (briefly) for how it may have formed. First, I got this response: "They look like longitudinal dunes to me. It would be nice to get the topography, but Mars Express will only have about one third of the resolution at this latitude. "Then I got this response: "...these are natural features, as with the 'face', which was subsequently shown to be a collection of hills. The human mind is of course pre-programmed by evolution to identify patterns and assimilate them in to 'pictures' we recognise. More data is required of such features to fully identify." It seemed to me that there was not much information in these responses, so I persevered a little more. I sent these pictures to 42 geologists picked at random from University Geology departments in the USA and the UK. 3 of them actually were kind enough to respond. This response came from an Associate Professor of Geology: These two images from the surface of Mars are certainly puzzling and have been floating around UFO web pages for some time. I am sorry but I do not believe in big conspiracy theories and that the government is trying to hide something from us concerning Mars or any other planet. I believe that we still have a lot to learn from Mars and that we should keep our minds as open as possible for interpretations that do not necessarily conform with what we are used to on Earth...I do not regard the above as being an explanation – it does not make any arguments based on points of data, or science, so was rather disappointing in this regard. A friend suggested that the dome may have formed from some kind of lava tube. Clearly, this is not an explanation that is based on a rigorous analysis of the available data – but then again, my friend is not a professional scientist (and neither am I). However, it is at least an idea - a starting point on which a model could be built – possibly taking into account that vulcanism on Mars is, according to existing models, much different than that at work on Earth. (On Mars, there is no visible evidence of plate-tectonics. This has allowed the highest volcano in the Solar System to form - Olympus Mons, which is approximately 27km high!) "It's about to be writ again 'In researching other anomalous Mars images, I came across a number of separate analyses of NASA image data which seem to strongly suggest that the colour of the Martian Sky could be quite different from the murky red colour which appears in the vast majority of the photos we have seen from the surface of the planet. One of these analyses was co-authored by Dr Gilbert Levin – who developed the Labelled Release life detection experiment mentioned earlier. (See http://mars.spherix.com/spie2003/SPIE_2003_Color_Paper.htm) An additional analysis of the "Colour Chart" images on the rovers, by Sir Charles Schultz III, can be found here http://www.xenotechresearch.com/skyfraud.htm. Another analysis, by Holger Isenberg, draws similar conclusions (http://mars-news.de/color/blue.html). Isenberg’s page has another fascinating image (whichever colour palette it is rendered with) which shows something that NASA describes as "a thin layer of water ice frost" (http://nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/imagcat/html/object_page/vl2_p21873.html). One begins to wonder why there has been such a debate about the presence of surface water (liquid or frozen) on Mars in the 26 years since this photograph was taken. Further questions about both the amount of water and the colour of the sky on Mars are raised by an ESA photo published on 28th July 2005. (See http://www.esa.int/SPECIALS/Mars_Express/SEMGA808BE_0.html) Why is the ice blue in colour? Could it be reflecting the colour of the sky on Mars? "Oh man! Wonder if he'll ever know" Even some of the most recent Spirit and Opportunity pictures seem to show yet more anomalies. I had always thought, like most people, that Mars was a cold, desert world. I was then intrigued to read this report in January 2004, on the BBC News website: Scientists are intrigued by the marks Spirit's airbags left on the surface. The soil shows an unusual cohesiveness, almost as if the soil grains were stuck together like mud. Jim Bell says that they see "scratch marks from where the airbags were retracted and there are places where rocks were actually dragged through the soil and the soil was kind of stripped up and folded in some places in very interesting and quite alien textures". Steve Squyres is also puzzled: "The way in which the surface has responded is bizarre. It looks like mud, but it can't be mud. We're going to have a real interesting time trying to figure this stuff out." (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/3387903.stm) Later images from the rover (e.g. http://qt.exploratorium.edu/mars/jpl-images/web/opportunity/pancam/2004-12-20/1P150975152EFF36CBP2693L2M1.JPG) seem to show there is another puzzle here. If you examine the image closely, you can see ridges in the sand. If you were to consider the impressions left by a child's toy (which had caterpillar tracks on the dry, sandy portion of a beach, you may be given to wonder "how could the ridges seen in the photographs form in dry, dusty sand?" It would be nice if, in helping us all to figure the mystery out, NASA would provide us with more colour images – the rovers can produce them, as shown by the back drop in various press conferences and some of the other rover pictures. "Look at those Cavemen go!" Further photo anomalies have been highlighted by Sir Charles Shults III, a US Scientist and researcher. He worked at Martin Marietta Aerospace for 10 years on software for Cruise Missiles. He has spoken at length, several times, on the US Coast to Coast talk show about his analysis of a number of photos from the Mars Rovers. (e.g. http://www.xenotechresearch.com/mk505a.htm)and http://www.xenotechresearch.com/mk507a.htm) He seems to have found what look like small, fossilised sea creatures. He has not been able to get anyone at NASA to publicly engage in the debate about his findings, and he states he was recently "bounced" from a scheduled conference appearance, where he would have presented these findings. Sir Charles has also documented evidence of image tampering, and other image evidence for liquid surface water on mars being shown by noticeable changes in surface features during a sequence of rover images. "Is there Life on Mars?" In summary, then, I have tried to present evidence which shows: 1) There are non-natural structures on Mars. 2) Surface water ice was photographed 26 years ago, in some detail. 3) Dr Gilbert Levin, creator of the Viking Life Detection Experiment says his experiment worked. 4) There is evidence of bio-marker gases being present in the Martian atmosphere. 5) There is some evidence that photos that NASA have presented to the public have not always shown appropriate colours. 6) A number of the recent rover pictures show evidence of soil moisture. 7) Some rover pictures appear, following some close analysis, to show fossils. Sir Charles Shults Adds...Sir Charles: A Fossil Hunter's Guide to Mars Tuesday, 4. November 2008 Thanks for the mention in the article, Andrew. I completed the research and wrote a book about the subject. If anyone is...
interested, it's here:
http://xenotechresearch.com/bookpromo.htm
Lots of fossils, history of the solar system, many details and all fully referenced. Just about 400 pages altogether on CD.

Cheers! There is also a fair amount of other additional evidence which strongly supports the view that things on Mars do not seem to be quite as we have been lead to believe by our standard reference works. The reader may wish to peruse articles on http://www.enterprisemission.com/ which give a further analysis and information about data presented in this article, along with a substantial amount more. Readers can then draw their own conclusions about what, if anything, seems to be happening with the data coming from the various Mars probes. In a follow-up article I hope to present more evidence, from another part of the solar system which seems to indicate, again, that the "cold-dead-and-never-was-alive" view that we are used to may not be entirely appropriate.

